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# Avalanche Notes

U S Forest Service  
Westwide Avalanche Network

JANUARY 1993

## Weather

January's storms followed a grooved track that began over the Sierra of California, and then spread inland to bring heavy snows to southern Idaho, Utah, Colorado, and northern New Mexico. Following December's lead, January brought four storms that battered the Sierra. Snows on the 1st-2nd totalled 24-26" and were an extension of a storm that began in late December. The second storm -- this one less intense -- came on the 6th-11th. The third hit on the 13th-18th: on the 13th-14th, Sugar Bowl and June Mountain got 37" of snow, and June Mt. recorded another 40" on the 16th-18th. The final storm came on the 20th-22nd, and Sugar Bowl got 32", and Alpine Meadows, 26". On the 21st, Alpine Meadows recorded a 2-hour average wind of 125 mph and a peak gust of 176 mph, a windstorm that felled 80 trees. For the month, Alpine Meadows received 190% of normal snows, and Mammoth Mountain, 180%. Kirkwood Meadows (not on the data sheet) received 153" of snow and recorded wind gusts of 112 mph on the 12th and 115 on the 30th.

The Cascades of Oregon and Washington were north of the main storm track and got below-normal snows: Mt. Hood Meadows, 90%; Crystal Mt., 77%; Stevens Pass, 68%; and Mt. Rainier, 62%. Only one real storm hit the region: on the 20th-24th, Mt. Hood Meadows got 35"; Mt. Rainier, 39"; Crystal Mt., 41"; and Stevens Pass, 43".

In the Intermountain region, the Pacific storms brought checkered snowfalls. For example, in Montana, Big Mountain got 105% of normal while Bridger Bowl got only 58%. In Idaho, Sun Valley recorded 190% of normal, while a little further east in Wyoming, Teton Pass got 78% and Jackson Hole, 90%. Jackson Hole, though, still recorded measurable snow on 24 of the first 25 days of the month. Schweitzer Basin, ID logged 25" of new snow on the 4th.

The Wasatch of Utah got hammered. Snowbird received 126" and Alta (not on the data sheet), 152". This was Alta's second highest January snowfall of record, topped only by 168" in January 1967. On the 2nd, Alta received 27", and Snowbird, 21". Snow fell daily on the 7th-11th: the heaviest came on the 9th-11th, when Alta got 55", and Snowbird, 41". For the month, Alta was 175% of normal, and Snowbird, 165%.

In Colorado, snowfall was normal or above at all sites. The northern mountains were 100-125% of normal; the central mountains, 100-145%, though Gothic recorded 220%; and the southern mountains, 130-170%, though Purgatory received 260%. Many sites recorded daily snows on the 7th-20th. In New Mexico, Taos received 31" on the 8th-12th and wound up with 125% of normal.

In Alaska, Alyeska received 23" on the 29th and wound up with 80% of normal January snows.



## Avalanche

Seven fatal avalanche accidents occurred in January. These were:

Jan 9, Missoula, MT: Four boys, ages 12-14, were on a day hike on Mt. Jumbo on the east side of town. On their descent they triggered a hard-slab avalanche in a gully that caught three of them. The fourth boy located one who was partly buried and another who was totally buried except for one arm, and dug these out. Then they quickly found the final victim who was totally buried but with one foot out. The snow had set up so hard that the survivors found it impossible to dig without shovels. It was not until 2 hours later that rescuers dug the victim out. His head was 4 feet under the snow, and he was dead from suffocation. He was 13.

Jan 9, Cameron Pass, CO: Two parties of three skiers were on the east side of Diamond Peak. One group had climbed to the top, was fully equipped for avalanche rescue, and was proceeding cautiously. The second group was on a broad bench 800 feet below and more than 1/4 mile south of the upper group. Both groups were aware of the other. One member of the upper group triggered an avalanche that ultimately fractured 3-6 feet deep and 2,200 feet across the top of Diamond Peak. It fell 1,000 feet and caught all three of the skiers below. One was swept into a tree, broke his jaw, and was shallowly buried. Another was totally buried except for one hand. The third was totally buried beneath 4 feet of snow. The three skiers from above descended to start the rescue. They dug out the man who had a hand out and started spot-probing for the other two. Unknown to them, the victim with the broken jaw dug himself out and left to bring other rescuers. One hour later the rescuers struck the final victim with a probe. He was dead from suffocation.

Jan 12, Vail, CO: Three men left the ski area boundary to ski an area called Marvin's Bowl, located in the East Vail Chutes -- the site of two previous avalanche accidents this winter. They triggered an avalanche that caught two. One was totally buried and could not be found by the two survivors. The next morning a rescue team and dog arrived by helicopter. The dog quickly alerted, and the rescuers dug out the victim's body from 4 feet of snow -- long dead from suffocation. Later that day, the rescue beacon he had ordered by mail arrived.

Jan 13, Sunlight, CO: A 23-year-old snowboarder entered a permanently closed area, triggered an avalanche, and was totally buried except for one hand and the tip of his board. His companion failed to see the clues and left to notify the patrol. Then, mysteriously, he led the hasty team to the wrong site. When rescuers finally found the avalanche, they quickly spied the victim, but rescue came too late. He was dug out dead from 1-1/2 feet of snow after a burial of 90 minutes. Death was due to suffocation, but the victim had broken both legs in a collision with a tree.

Jan 16, Sundance, UT: A 50-year-old man was skiing with his 15-year-old nephew, when he entered a roped and signed avalanche closure. He triggered a slide that carried him 600 feet and buried him in a gully. The patrol's avalanche dog was at the vet (Murphy's law #628), so a hasty probe team responded and was at the site 25 minutes after the avalanche. They hit the victim on the first pass of a coarse probe line. He was 3 feet deep, buried 40 minutes, and dead from suffocation.



Jan 22, Breckenridge, CO: A party of three skiers left the ski area boundary in white-out conditions. They triggered a hard-slab avalanche that caught two and totally buried one. The two survivors were helpless without rescue gear. They reentered the ski area and notified the patrol. The hasty team brought a dog that alerted almost immediately. Shovelers uncovered the victim from 5 feet of snow. He had been buried an hour and was dead from suffocation. He was 18.

Jan 26, Ten Mile Canyon, CO: An ice climber was climbing unprotected when a small soft slab, or wet slab, released in the gully above the icefall. It knocked the man off the ice, and he fell 40 feet and was buried. His climbing partner followed the rope but was unable to dig in the debris without a shovel. She ran 100 yards to Interstate 70, stopped a car, and brought back several rescuers with shovels. After about 30 minutes, they uncovered the victim from 3 feet of snow. He was not breathing and had suffered multiple broken bones and severe internal injuries. Nine hours later, he died from these injuries.

There were several notable non-fatal avalanche encounters in January. In Alaska on the 8th, a convoy of trucks was passing over Atigun Pass in the Brooks Range. An avalanche hit two trucks; one was knocked off the road and rolled over. The truck was heavily damaged, but the driver escaped unhurt. In Utah, on the 1st a backcountry skier near Logan was buried but saved by his beacon; and on the 10th at Alta, a controlled avalanche hit 13 cars in a parking lot and totalled 3 of them. In Idaho, on the 22nd near Sun Valley, two avalanches struck and damaged two homes.

We saved the best for last. On the 4th at Kirkwood Meadows, CA, a 25-year-old skier triggered and was totally buried in an in-bounds avalanche. His two companions, finding no clues, notified the patrol. The hasty search team arrived with two avalanche dogs and entered the side of the debris area. The second dog alerted 30 seconds after being told to search. Shovelers dug out the victim from 2-3 feet of snow. He had been buried about 17 minutes and was just losing consciousness. He recovered with only minor injuries, and thus became only the third live recovery by a trained avalanche dog in the U.S.

A total of 35 incidents were reported in January. These caught 46 people, partly buried 10, buried 11, injured 5, and killed 7. Avalanches caught 17 vehicles and damaged 4. Two buildings were damaged. Avalanche statistics through January are 93 incidents, 120 people caught, 25 partly buried, 28 buried, 8 injured, and 17 killed; 23 vehicles caught and 7 damaged; and 3 buildings damaged.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
WESTWIDE WEATHER AND AVALANCHE NETWORK  
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

JANUARY 1993  
SUMMARY OF WEATHER AND SNOW CONDITIONS

AREA	SNOWFALL				WATER EQUIVALENT								SNOW DEPTH				TEMPERATURE			WIND SPEED AND DIRECTION																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																												
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CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS

ASPEN MOUNTAIN, COLO	106.7	.04	30	1	3.90	.80	23	13	9	2	0	74	1	43	49	27.2	11.0	19.1	7.3	10	3	31	220	22	
ASPEN HIGHLANDS, CO	41.8	.07	8	23	3.10	.55	23	10	8	1	0	50	23	36	42	25.6	10.3	18.0	4.4M	1M	1M	23	210	22	
BEAR LAKE, RMNP, CO	32.9	.08	5	9	2.56	.26	21	13	7	0	0	44	23	26	35	25.1	12.3	18.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	
BEAVER CREEK, COLO	48.8	.08	7	20	3.89	.65	23	12	7	4	0	60	23	40	51	24.9M	8.4M	16.6M	6.3M	2M	0M	20	270	22	
BERTHOUD PASS, COLO	59.6	.06	8	9	3.41	.38	23	14	8	0	0	51	21	31	42	24.8	4.7	14.8	13.4	51	28	44	220	22	
BRECKENRIDGE, COLO	37.6	.07	8	23	2.45	.60	23	11	7	1	0	285	3	28	44	20.8	5.9	13.3	14.1	50	28	36	270	25	
CRESTED BUTTE, COLO	58.0	.10	10	7	5.80	.85	8	14	12	4	0	--	--	--	--	23.2	11.7	17.4	10.0M	17M	8M	65	190	3	
GOTHIC, COLO	117.0	.06	16	14	6.99	1.02	8	15	13	7	1	75	17	40	60	24.5	5.2	14.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	
KEYSTONE, COLO	36.6	.06	6	9	2.34	.30	9	14	5	0	0	37	22	23	31	27.4	7.1	17.2	6.5	2	0	--	--	--	
PURGATORY, COLO	88.3	.08	18	19	6.75	1.50	19	12	10	6	1	82	19	47	64	21.5	8.9	15.2	--	--	--	--	19	360	23
RED MTN PASS U.S.550	80.0	.09	12	8	7.34	1.00	8	15	14	8	1	64	20	28	51	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
SUNLIGHT, COLO	55.0	.08	9	12	4.45	.75	12	13	10	3	0	56	14	41	49	26.7	10.6	18.6	--	--	--	--	--	--	
TAOS, NEW MEXICO	54.0	.09	11	9	4.85	1.15	9	11	9	4	1	86	20	58	75	26.8	13.0	19.9	10.8M	26M	4M	33	300	1	
TELLURIDE, COLO	61.2	.07	8	8	4.39	.60	19	15	9	3	0	55	20	33	44	22.1	10.1M	16.1M	6.4M	4M	0M	--	--	--	
VAIL, COLO	62.5	.07	8	7	4.37	.55	9	16	6	4	0	60	23	37	52	22.6	10.0	16.3	7.6	6	1	28	200	22	
WINTER PARK 1E, COLO	45.0	.05	7	7	2.39	.44	7	10	5	0	0	39	21	25	33	28.5	3.1	15.8	--	--	--	--	--	--	
WINTER PARK S.A., CO	68.3	.06	8	20	4.16	.50	20	16	12	1	0	57	22	39	49	20.8	7.7	14.3	7.6M	10M	2M	30	290	21	
WOLF CREEK, COLO	80.2	.12	14	8	9.72	1.50	9	15	13	8	3	109	20	65	91	27.0M	11.0M	19.0M	16.3M	52M	34M	55	300	22	

INTERMOUNTAIN

BIG MOUNTAIN, MONT	74.0	--	17	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	99	4	74	84	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
BRIDGER BOWL, MONT	32.0	.07	7	2	2.35	.70	2	7	4	2	0	61	23	49	54	24.7	8.9	16.8	11.7M	31M	10M	56	120	8	10	10
JACKSON HOLE 1, WYO	74.8	.10	14	23	7.54	2.15	23	18	12	3	2	77	23	59	66	19.5	11.3	15.4	15.9	74	30	44	240	23	10	10
SCHWEITZER BASIN, ID	64.5	--	25	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	91	5	70	77	23.9M	11.4M	17.7M	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
SNOWBIRD, UTAH	125.7	.08	21	3	9.54	1.50	3	17	13	8	3	104	11	71	93	30.1	15.3	22.7	22.8	90	70	--	--	--	--	--

WEST COAST

ALPENTAL, WASH	39.5	.09	11	20	9.01	3.82	25	7	7	5	4		108	23	93	100	24.1M	15.4M	19.7M	15.0M	66M	38M	115	200	21
ALPINE MEADOWS, CAL	129.0	.13	17	2	20.04	2.90	22	16	16	11	8		129	21	90	109	31.5	20.0	25.7	29.6	100	89	130	240	21
ALYESKA, ALASKA	73.7	.07	23	29	4.97	1.65	29	10	5	2	2		105	29	78	85	23.4	14.7	19.1	5.3	3	0	905	0	23
CRYSTAL MTN 2, WASH	59.3	.11	15	20	6.30	1.95	21	8	8	5	2		73	23	59	65	24.9	14.9	19.9	--	--	--	--	--	--
CRYSTAL MTN 1, WASH	60.0	.08	15	20	5.66	1.38	20	10	8	5	1		78	24	56	64	24.7	19.9	22.3	15.5M	64M	40M	57	220	21
HEAVENLY VALLEY, CAL	88.0	--	16	21	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		114	22	85	101	31.9	11.8	21.8	--	--	--	--	--	--
JUNE MOUNTAIN, CALIF	150.5	.09	26	14	13.20	2.00	8	16	14	9	6		101	18	39	72	34.3	16.2	25.3	--	--	--	--	--	--
MAMMOTH MTN, CALIF	143.1	--	40	23	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		108	18	10	81	27.3M	13.9M	20.6M	--	--	--	--	--	--
MT. HOOD MDWS, ORE.	78.0	.11	15	20	10.37	2.20	20	17	11	7	3		115	24	92	100	30.7	17.5	24.1	15.6	61	44	48	230	20
MT. RAINIER PARADISE	84.5	.10	22	4	12.38	3.80	25	14	12	6	4		131	24	105	116	27.3	15.3	21.3	11.3	56	28	35	280	20
SNOQUALMIE PASS I-90	52.0	.10	14	4	9.57	3.40	25	7	6	6	5		77	22	58	64	28.9M	15.5M	22.2M	17.1	85	47	--	--	--
SQUAW VALLEY, CALIF	99.5	--	17	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		80	18	50	67	32.1	16.1	24.1	--	--	--	--	--	--
STEVENS PASS, WASH	64.0	.05	20	21	6.37	2.00	25	9	7	4	3		82	24	63	70	24.2	15.5	19.8	11.7M	31M	16M	--	--	--
SUGAR BOWL, CALIF	154.0	--	24	13	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		190	22	134	165	--	--	--	14.0M	59M	35M	70	220	22

-- DATA INCOMPLETE OR MISSING

M--ONE OR MORE DAYS OF RECORD MISSING-IF AVERAGE VALUE IS ENTERED, LESS THAN 10 DAYS RECORD IS MISSING

IF M IS ENTERED IN WIND SPEED COLUMN, LESS THAN 37 6-HOUR PERIODS ARE MISSING

GE--GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO

U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
WESTWIDE WEATHER AND AVALANCHE NETWORK  
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

JANUARY 1993  
AVALANCHE SUMMARY

AREA	TOTAL	TOTAL	DATES OF				NUMBER OF DAYS WITH		TYPE OF AVALANCHE							FRACTURE LINE HEIGHTS IN FEET			VERTICAL DESCENT IN FEET				AVALS ACROSS MAJOR ACCESS ROADS NO.			
	A V A L S  THIS MONTH NO.	A V A L S  THIS WINTER NO.	F I S T	L A S T	MAX ONE DAY NO.	D A T E	A V A L S	S L U F S	A R T I F C L	N A T U R A L	SLABS					L O O S E	GE 2	GE 4	GE 6	GE 200	GE 500	GE 1000		MAX FEET		
											H A R D	S O F T	W O W N	O F F E T												
															NUMBER											
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS																										
ARAPAHOE BASIN, COLO	46	70	9	27	10	9	14	1	33	13	0	46	0	0	41	6	0	43	22	6	1100	0				
ASPEN SNOWMASS, COLO	41	41	2	24	14	12	8	0	40	1	8	33	0	0	18	8	2	31	0	0	370	0				
ASPEN HIGHLANDS, COL	97	167	1	30	25	10	27	0	25	72	5	85	0	7	36	1	0	44	28	18	2500	0				
BEAVER CREEK, COLO	1	2	29	29	1	29	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	0				
BERTHOUD PASS U.S.40	7	16	8	30	1	22+	7	0	5	2	2	5	0	0	5	2	0	4	4	1	1600	1				
BERTHOUD PASS, COLO	24	46	1	30	7	30	11	0	1	23	0	24	0	0	16	2	0	23	12	1	1000	0				
BRECKENRIDGE, COLO	15	28	14	27	5	14	6	0	10	5	7	8	0	0	15	6	3	12	2	2	1200	0				
COPPER MT, COLO	7	20	11	28	2	25+	4	0	6	1	4	3	0	0	7	2	0	2	0	0	400	0				
CRESTED BUTTE, COLO	41	72	1	31	7	12+	18	0	39	2	1	40	0	0	38	15	1	34	10	0	800	0				
GOTHIC, COLO	78	133	1	29	9	22+	24	0	0	78	0	58	0	20	54	14	6	78	56	26	2700	0				
LOVELAND PASS U.S. 6	11	16	12	30	5	22+	3	0	1	10	5	6	0	0	4	1	0	6	4	0	900	0				
RED MTN PASS U.S.550	123	123	2	22	27	11	14	0	65	58	11	110	0	2	22	8	0	41	27	16	2700	38				
STEAMBOAT SPRNGS, CO	3	3	8	19	2	8	2	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	300	0				
SUNLIGHT, COLORADO	1	5	13	13	1	13	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	200	0				
TAOS, NEW MEXICO	30	80	4	19	14	11	5	0	30	0	3	24	0	3	15	4	1	17	3	0	900	0				
TELLURIDE, COLO	56	82	7	26	9	7	16	0	48	8	3	51	0	2	34	14	1	19	9	5	3000	0				
URAD MINE, COLO	18	22	4	30	7	12	6	0	5	13	2	15	0	1	13	4	1	18	15	7	2000	0				
VAIL, COLO	10	14	7	28	3	12	6	0	9	1	1	9	0	0	7	0	0	10	4	1	1000	0				
WINTER PARK S.A., CO	7	12	10	21	3	21	4	0	0	7	1	6	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	400	0				
WOLF CREEK, COLO	33	75	8	22	14	8	9	0	26	7	1	32	0	0	12	0	0	11	0	0	310	0				
INTERMOUNTAIN																										
BIG MOUNTAIN, MONT	26	57	4	25	13	4	3	0	26	0	0	25	0	1	3	0	0	5	0	0	450	0				
BIG SKY, MONT	70	168	1	26	10	11+	16	0	68	2	19	51	0	0	17	3	0	68	58	9	1200	0				
BRIDGER BOWL, MONT	60	135	2	25	22	2	8	0	60	0	2	58	0	0	16	0	0	53	43	15	1100	0				
JACKSON HOLE, WYO	29	140	6	25	15	23	6	0	28	1	0	29	0	0	19	0	0	29	25	4	1300	0				
WEST COAST																										
ALPENTAL, WASH	76	172	3	27	33	21	6	0	76	0	1	66	0	9	10	1	0	74	33	7	1500+	0				
ALPINE MEADOWS, CAL	406	617	1	21	60	10	16	0	357	49	1	394	2	9	70	4	0	367	106	0	900	5				
ALYESKA, ALASKA	94	153	3	30	24	17	13	0	76	18	8	81	0	5	60	3	2	86	78	49	2300	0				
CRYSTAL MTN, WASH	96	318	11	30	22	20	12	0	96	0	1	88	5	2	10	0	0	95	37	2	1100	0				
HEAVENLY VALLEY, CAL	89	99	2	23	21	2	11	0	89	0	0	80	0	9	5	5	5	89	27	3	1200	0				
JUNE MOUNTAIN, CALIF	19	22	2	18	5	2	8	0	19	0	0	19	0	0	5	0	0	16	1	1	1000	0				
KIRKWOOD MDWS, CAL	103	164	1	21	21	2	16	0	101	2	16	69	0	18	43	8	1	81	35	6	1500+	0				
MAMMOTH MTN, CALIF	7	37	2	2	7	2	1	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	400	0				
MT. RAINIER, WASH	4	4	24	24	4	24	1	1	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	150	4				
MT. HOOD MEADOWS	86	239	1	30	15	4	16	0	81	5	0	83	3	0	8	0	0	51	20	2	1500	0				
SNOQUALMIE PASS I-90	59	113	3	24	34	24	5	0	32	27	0	28	12	19	0	0	0	46	28	19	2800	9				
SQUAW VALLEY, CALIF	176	340	1	21	37	13	14	1	174	2	2	172	1	1	29	3	1	100	5	0	600	0				
STEVENS PASS, WASH	187	513	19	26	75	20	7	0	187	0	0	187	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
SUGAR BOWL, CALIF	43	79	1	20	11	16+	10	0	43	0	1	42	0	0	13	1	1	24	7	0	700	0				

-- = DATA INCOMPLETE OR MISSING  
GE = GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO  
+ = ALSO OCCURRED ON OTHER DATES